



The National  
**CONSUMER VOICE**  
for Quality Long-Term Care  
formerly NCCNHR

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The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care is submitting this testimony in support of HB 5322, *An Act Concerning Nursing Home Facility Minimum Staffing Levels*.

Low staffing levels are the single most important contributor to poor quality of nursing home care in the United States. In addition to extensive research linking staffing to improved quality of care, higher staffing standards have been shown to be cost-effective as well.

Despite these well-established findings, there is no mandated minimum number of nurse and nursing assistant hours per resident/day required by the Federal government. In 2001, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) released its report, *Appropriateness of Minimum Nursing Staffing Ratios in Nursing Homes*, which provided specific minimum staffing thresholds below which quality of care would be compromised. This report puts forth the recommendation for a daily minimum standard of 4.1 hours of total nursing time and found that staffing levels falling below this minimum put nursing home residents at risk. The Institute of Medicine supported these findings.

Current Federal law requires that nursing homes participating in Medicare and Medicaid have "sufficient staff to provide nursing services to attain or maintain the highest levels of physical, mental and psychosocial well-being of residents." The lack of specificity at the Federal level means it is left to the states to establish staffing requirements, and there is wide variation in state law as it relates to minimum staffing in nursing homes.

Connecticut currently mandates a staffing level of only 1.9 hours per resident/day - among the worst in the country. For a state that excels in many other areas, such a minimal requirement is shocking. While this legislation, which would increase that requirement to 2.7 hours per resident/day, is still far from the 4.1 hours per resident day the government study recommends, it is a very important first step in the right direction.

Stronger laws are long overdue in Connecticut, especially since nursing home residents in this state and across the nation have higher acuity levels than ever before. The massive study done by HHS, and the scores of studies done in the years since, have proven the link between staffing and quality outcomes.

Even top-notch nurses and nurse aides can't deliver quality care if there aren't enough of them. The time has come to strengthen Connecticut's nursing home staffing laws. The state's most vulnerable residents deserve no less.

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*The National Consumer Voice for Quality Long-Term Care (formerly NCCNHR) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit membership organization founded in 1975 by Elma L. Holder that advocates for quality care and quality of life for consumers in all long-term-care settings.*

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